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The AVERAGE MAN

By OLIVER P. PARKER

Author of
CLAIM ALLOWED



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The AVERAGE MAN

By OLIVER P. PARKER

AUTHOR OF

STANDING BY
CLAIM ALLOWED
CLAIM ALLOWED—Continued
THE WINNING OF LATANE
THE CALL OF THE FLAG
BETTER THAN GOLD
THE VALEDICTORY
LONE STAR
ETC.

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FOREWORD 1921



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MAR -5 1921

no 1

THE AVERAGE MAN

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

WILLIAM NORWOOD—A Chicago Broker.
HELEN NORWOOD—His wife.
MARJORY NORWOOD—His daughter.
FLORENCE NORWOOD—His daughter.
JIMMIE NORWOOD—His only son.
MISS RAND—Jimmy's secretary.
DR. BRUCE—The family physician.
JAMES SLAYTON—Jimmy's grandfather.
BOB MONDELL—Mr. Slayton's manager.
MOLLY MONDELL—Bob's wife.
MARY MONDELL—Their daughter.
MRS. GUNN—A neighborhood gossip.
UNCLE DAN—Himself a Slayton.

An ALL STAR cast of seven females and six males.
Time to play; two hours, fifteen minutes.

ACT I

SCENE—A well furnished living room in the home of James Slayton down on the farm. Use only library table, center, with chairs and divan suitably placed. Pictures on walls. Doors right and left. Window, back.

MRS. MONDELL—(L. with sheets of paper in hand. Takes yellow pencil from ledger which she finds in table drawer and sticks it in her hair with some difficulty. Opens book as if to make a record and discovers pencil is lost. Looks about table, in book, under book, etc.) O, where IS that pencil! (Looks under chair) O, uncle Dan!

DAN—(Off R.) Yassam.

MRS. M.—Do you know where I can find a pencil?

D.—(R. Limp slightly. He is an old negro, and carries a half peeled apple—with the peel dangling—and a pan and knife.) What did you say, Miss Molly?

MRS. M.—Do you know where I can find a pencil?

D.—Now, not jes off-hand, I don't. No'm.

MRS. M.—I keep one in this ledger but it seems to have disappeared. (Sits.)

D.—Wellam, I'll find you one. (Goes L. and stops behind her chair, craning neck to look at pencil in her hair.)

MRS. M.—If you can't find a pencil get a pen.

D.—Will a hairpin do?

MRS. M.—O no, uncle Dan. I want to write with it. Just get a pencil.

D.—What's de matter wid dis'n. (Points.)

MRS. M.—(Remembers) O, of course. How stupid of me. I must be getting old, uncle Dan. (Writes)

D.—Yassam. If you ain't purty keerful you'll git a leetle older as you go along. (Goes R.)

MRS. M.—(Smiles) Yes, that is true.

D.—But you got a long way to go, yit.

MRS. M.—I couldn't go far in times like these.

D.—You is jes pestered wid all dese new farm hands what Massar Slayton is gittin to take de place of de regular hands what's gone to war. Dey ain't much punkins, is dey?

MRS. M.—(Writing) Pretty poor substitutes.

D.—Specially dat'n what come dis mawnin. He's de substitu-tu-tutenest one yit.

MRS. M.—Did a new one come this morning?

D.—Yassam. Dat'n what's got his hair roached up like a mule. Dat's him. And I don't like de way my dog done when he smelled of him.

MRS. M.—How was that?

D.—He bristled up jes like dat man's hair. And when a dog does dat, it's a bad sign.

MRS. M.—That is the dog's instinct.

D.—I reggin he did git a nose full.

MRS. M.—O, well, we must take what we can get. What is this new man's name? I will put him on the payroll. (Turns pages.)

D.—He fust name is Yawn. Dat's all I know.

MRS. M.—I will put that down and get the rest of it later. How does he spell it?

D.—I don't know dat, nuther.

MRS. M.—Then pronounce it again.

D.—Jes YAWN. Dat's all. And de rest of it sounds jes like a Fode warmin up on a cold mawnin.

MRS. M.—(Laugh) Where is this man.

D.—Out at de cow barn.

MRS. M.—Go ask him what his name is. And if it is as bad as you say you'd better ask him how he spells it.

D.—(Places pan in chair) Now if I don't come back PURTY quick you'd better send for me. (L)

MRS. GUNN—(R. She is dressed unbecomingly and carries parasol and fan. Keeps lips pursed.) Well, I just walked right in.

MRS. M.—(Rises, and is polite). Why, good morning Mrs. Gunn. Wont you sit down?

MRS. G.—(Sits R.) Well, I really haven't time. but I was telling Mizries Price only yesterday—or maybe it was the day before that, (Thinks) —I wont be positive—but anyway I told her that I thought it was a down-right shame for you to stay home so close and not know nothin' about what's a-goin' on amongst the neighbors.

MRS. M.—Everybody is pretty busy, I guess.

MRS. G.—We-ell, yes. People is busy since the war broke out. There's lots to do and help is powerful scarce; but we oughtn't to lose interest in the doings of the neighbors. If their misdeeds ain't helt up before 'm, they aint no tellin' what they might do.

MRS. M.—Important matters should come first.

MRS. G.—(Pleased) That's just what I said to Mizries Fulghum not more'n two weeks ago. Well, now, I say TWO weeks. It may have been longer'n that, but not more'n THREE weeks, at the very outside. You know I have so many conversations I can't be precise about when they occur.

MRS. M.—I shouldn't worry about that, Mrs. Gunn. It isn't WHEN we say it, but WHAT we say, that counts most, you know, and—

MRS. G.—O, I know it's only the LATEST news that counts, and when it comes to knowing what is going on in the community I come about as near to leadin' the choir as the next one.

MRS. M.—(Smile) Yes, that is true enough.

MRS. G.—(Pleased) Thank you. It come kinder natural with me, and I reckon I must have some talent for gettin' on to secrets, and gatherin' news generally. And I ain't selfish with it, either. I spread it as fast as I get it.

MRS. M.—Aren't you afraid you will sometimes start an evil report that will hurt a lot of innocent people?

MRS. G.—We-ell, yes; but that don't happen often. And when it does it is just one of them mistakes human hair is flesh to. They aint none of us perfect, you know.

MRS. M.—I know that. but a lot of our imperfections are traceable to an evil tongue.

MRS. G.—That is what I have always said. And speakin of imperfections, don't these terrible war times bring 'm out, though?

MRS. M.—It should, yes. All of them.

MRS. G.—Well it's a-doin it. I declare I have heard things that my neighbors has done to git out'r doin their duty that has shocked me.

MRS. M.—I am surprised to hear that.

MRS. G.—I knowed you'd be.

MRS. M.—I have been thinking this community is doing its duty in a very patriotic way.

MRS. G.—(Edging to front of chair) Why, Mizries Mondell, you should ought to know the INSIDE secrets like I do. (Leaning forward) And at them Red Cross meetins—why you'd be surprised. (Stares at her and is very serious about it) O, I could tell you a lot of secrets we never would a-knowned if this war hadn't a come on us just when it did.

MRS. M.—Hasn't it brought out good qualities?

MRS. G.—O, a few maybe; but they don't show up like the bad ones. But you know how that is. When a body does something good it aint as surprisin as when something bad crops out on'm.

MRS. M.—That is a sign of a healthy condition.

MRS. G.—That is just what I was saying to Mizries Watson. As long as folks tell all the bad things they know about their neighbors, they's some hope for'm.

MRS. M.—I seem to miss you at the Red Cross. What days do you go?

MRS. G.—We-ell you might say I have no regular days. You see I spend most of my time on the outside encouragin others to do their duty. That's work that just anybody caint do, you know.

MRS. M.—I should think it would be easy.

MRS. G.—Well, it aint. And the people don't realize what a hard job I have, of it. And—

D.—(R.) I got dat name for you, Miss Molly.

MRS. G.—(Quickly) What name? I'd like to know.

D.—I'll spell it and you can pernounce it.

MRS. M.—(Turns to book) I am ready.

D.—Now keep up wid me. (Spells) P-X-R-Q- (Thinks and repeats qqqq) O, yes. P-X-R-Q-B-V-D-C-H-T-Q-Z.

MRS. G.—Land sakes alive. You aint hirin one of them, ah, ah, COWshevikis, air you?

D.—Well, now, Miss Gunn, if dis'n is a Sheviki ertall he's a, ah, ah.

MRS. M.—Is that all of his name?

D.—Dat's jes only de fust load. You hold what you got, and I'll git de rest of it. (R.)

MRS. G.—Aint you a-feared people will talk about you hirin a man with a name like that?

MRS. M.—Why no. Why should they. Mr. Slayton must have help of some kind.

MRS. G.—Well, I reckon it is a leetle hard to keep a big farm like this'n

a-goin. And they tell me you air goin to have Mary come home from that fine school to help out. You aint, air you?

MRS. M.—She came yesterday.

MRS. G.—She did! I don't understand how it happened that I didn't know that.

MRS. M.—We didn't intend it as a secret.

MRS. G.—Well, that explains why I didn't know it. I thought you was kinder doin it on the sly. And the neighbors thinks when Mary gits back from that Vassey school she'll be so stuck up she wont even want to live on the farm. Let alone work on it.

MRS. M.—Mary loves the farm, and she loves to help run it. And I hope not many of my good neighbors feel that a little culture will spoil her.

MRS. G.—And some people say Mr. Slayton is payin for her schoolin and that he is goin to leave her a part of this big farm. And I think it would be nice if he did. Don't you?

MRS. M.—Now, Mrs. Gunn, everybody knows that Mr. Salyton is paying for Mary's education. He has always been good to her, and she loves him next to me and her father; but please don't spoil it all by thinking she will inherit his property.

MRS. G.—Well, aint your husband manager of his big farm; and aint you both lived here in the house and took care of him?

MRS. M.—Yes, ever since his only daughter married that rich Mr. Norwood and went to Chicago, I have done the best I could to make it as home-like as possible for him; but he has paid us well for what we have done and will owe us nothing when he dies.

MRS. G.—Well, just the same, I figure Mary'l git the property. Mr. Slayton aint a-goin to forget what youall have done for him while his daughter and her children aint even been out here to see him in nigh on to ten years. And if I was him I'd quit goin to see them too. Wouldn't you?

MRS. M.—Why no, Mrs. Gunn. I would do just as he does—love my own people, and leave them my property—just as he will do.

MRS. G.—Huh, You caint fool me. Mary 'l git some of it. And if I was you I'd keep her in that fine school and make a lady out er her.

MRS. M.—Fussing about the farm with Mr. Slayton and her father as she has always done will not hurt her, or embarrass any of us. She likes to work outdoors. And Mr. Slayton says she is the best automobile mechanic in the county. And when the war is over she will finish her school, and, I hope, be a very useful woman.

MRS. G.—Do you know, I have often told my boy I hoped he'd marry a girl just like Mary.

MRS. M.—It is nice of you to say that.

MRS. G.—They's a-goin to be a lot er weddins when the war is over. And as I was tellin Mizries Bogul I think the boys what went and done they duty ought to have first choice.

MRS. M.—Men who can win a war can win a girl.

MRS. G.—That's just what I told my boy. But he says Mary allus took up for that grandson of Mr. Slayton's. What was that boy's name?

MRS. M.—Jimmy Norwood. His only grandson.

MRS. G.—Has he gone to war, do you know?

MRS. M.—I don't know. Mr. Slayton doesn't hear from any of them very often.

MRS. G.—Well, when he does he'l find that he didn't go to no war. His rich dady'l manage to keep him at home. AND it wouldn't surprise me to hear any day now that your husband was fired and this boy put in his place for that very purpose.

MRS. M.—You have a vivid imagination.

MRS. G.—It's my talent for seeing things a-fore anybody else does.

MRS. M.—Yes. (yawns behind her hand.)
 MRS. G.—You aint been losin sleep, have you?
 MRS. M.—Moving the clock up cost me an hour.
 D.—(R) Jes add S-K-Y to what you got.
 MRS. M.—(Writes) That doesn't make sense.
 D.—It ain't supposed to. (Waits) Spell it.
 MRS. M.—P-X-R-Q-B-V-D-C-H-T-Q-Z-S-K-Y.
 D.—Dat's exactly right. Don't lose it.
 MRS. M.—How about that first name, Yawn?
 D.—O, dat's jes plain old JOHN.
 MRS. M.—Well he is on the payroll anyway.
 D.—And now you kin scratch him off.
 MRS. M.—What do you mean?
 D.—Miss Mary done fired him.
 MRS. M.—Fired him! What for?
 D.—Well, she found him asleep. And lemme tell you somepin—his hair was layin down flat. But when she woke him up it stood straight up again.
 MRS. M.—She didn't fire him for that, did she?
 D.—No'm. If he'd jes only bristled up it'd been all right. But he called her "sweetie."
 MRS. G.—Where is Mary?
 D.—She fixin de amputator on a truck.
 MRS. G.—Amputator! What is that, I wönder.
 D.—Dat's er, er—Miss Molly you tell her.
 MRS. M.—I imagine it's the cut-out.
 D.—Is dat satisfactory?
 MRS. G.—O, yes I understand it now.
 MRS. M.—(Places book in drawer) Well, Mrs. Gunn, I must go to the kitchen now. Would you like to see how conveniently it is arranged?
 MRS. G.—(Rise) Well, yes. I'd like to see the runnin water and epileptic lights.
 MRS. M.—You may finish peeling the apples, Uncle Dan. (Ex. with Mrs. G.—L.)
 D.—(Takes up apple with dangling peel, and pan, and goes R. Meeting Mary. She should wear slightly soiled unionalls, gauntlet gloves, and a sunshade, which she draws backward from her head as she enters. In her right hand is a bright pair of pliers. On her face are several streaks of grime, as becomes an auto mechanic. Her neck and throat are rosy clean in contrast. (Note: If it is considered, ah, unbecoming to wear the unionalls she may wear a tan shirt waist open at the collar. The unionalls are better) Did you git it fixed, Miss Mary? Or did you run out of hairpins?
 MARY—(Laughing) If you tell anybody I put those hairpins in that commutator I'll (Pokes pliers at him, opening and closing them.)
 D.—(Backs off extending the apple towards her) Lo-o-ok out, Miss Mary. I don't need fixin.
 M.—O, let me try my fortune again.
 D.—Well, you put up dat Betsy Bug, fust.
 M.—(Sticks pliers in side pocket, or lays them on table) Now we shall see what the future has in store for me. (Takes the peel and carefully throws it over shoulder to R.)
 D.—(Stoops over the peel.) Another "J."
 M.—It is always "J," isn't it?
 D.—I ain't never seed you throw nuffin but a "J" yit. Dat must sholy be yo pint.
 M.—It is the way you cut the peel.
 D.—It's de way you thows 'm. You jest nachully puts de right curve on 'm. Now try it again.

M.—All right. (Throws as before.)

D.—Same old story. Now dat looks spooferticous. Who you reggin dat J is fur, nohow?

M.—O, just anybody, uncle Dan. (Goes L.)

MRS. G.—(Off L.) Well it shore is nice.

M.—Isn't that MIZRIES Gunn?

D.—Yassam. And she is loaded for bear.

M.—Don't tell her that you saw me. (Tiptoes to R. Mrs. G.-L. just as she reaches center, and watches her under her glasses until she is at door R.) Well, I declare. Ain't that you, Mary?

M.—(Caught, turns smiling) Why, yes, Mrs. Gunn. And I was trying to get away because, ah, well, you see I am not presentable. (Ex. D.—R.)

MRS. G.—That's all right. Come and kiss me.

M.—If you can stand it I can. (Takes her cheeks in her gloved hands and gives her a lingering kiss.)

MRS. G.—(Without other changes in their positions draws her head back) That is one of them TIME EXPOSURE kisses, ain't it?

G.—How do you like 'm?

MRS. G.—Too soft—entirely. (Mary releases her cheeks, leaving the prints of her gloves). I declare to goodness, you never will get that face clean. Ain't you afraid it'll ruin your complexion? My face never was that dirty.

M.—Maybe you never played in the dirt.

MRS. G.—Sit down and tell me some news.

M.—I can't possibly do that now, but if you will come back some other day I will.

MRS. G.—Is that an invite to stay for dinner?

M.—O, do stay, wont you?

MRS. G.—No, not today. I just had a letter from my boy Henry. Want to know what he said?

M.—I hope Henry is well.

MRS. G.—Just as well as can be. You know Henry allus was a healthy child.

M.—Yes. I can say that much for him.

MRS. G.—And I was just tellin yore ma—well, it was just a little secret of our, but I'll tell you any way. I says to her that I think the boys what went and done they duty should ought to have pick and choice when the war is over.

M.—O, they will, I am sure.

MRS. G.—You wouldn't as much as look at a man what you knowed was a slacker. Now would you?

M.—Not very pleasantly, I am afraid.

MRS. G.—I knowed you felt that way about it. And Henry has been in the service ever since the first draft caught him.

M.—Yes, Henry didn't lose any time. How does he like his work in THE SHIP YARDS?

MRS. G.—Well, he aint satisfied. He says he'd much rather be in the trenches.

M.—(Firmly) Then why doesn't he go?

MRS. G.—We-ell, you are busy today and I wont keep you from your work. Come over to see me sometime. Goodby. (R)

M.—Goodby. (Goes to table) Gee, that was easy.

D.—(R) You didn't slap her, did you?

M.—Honest to goodness, uncle Dan, that is one-piece of mischief I didn't intend. (Takes an apple) These apples are pretty. Such a nice rich red. (Bites one.)

D.—Dem yaller ones is good too.

M.—Yes, but they are YELLOW.

D.—(Takes apple) Dis yaller is only skin deep. De apple is all right at heart. You used to like yaller apples. Don't you remember dat day a long time ago when Massar Jimmy clum up to git dat big yaller hoss apple for you, and fell and broke his arm?

M.—That was a long time ago.

D.—Dat don't make no diffunce. You liked him and you sho could make him climb for you.

M.—(Seriously) But that was when we were little fellows. He never comes back any more. He has forgotten those happy days. But I never will.

D.—Do you know I look for him back out here sometime. Dat is if he don't get kilt in de war. He's about old enough to go, ain't he?

M.—He is nineteen, but he won't stand back on that. Jimmy is a RED apple, uncle Dan.

D.—Maybe he is since he got ripe, but he sho was a GREEN 'n de las time I saw him.

MR. SLAYTON—(R. Dressed as a well to do farmer. Face red, hair gray. Carries several letters and a small package and some papers.) Well, hello, muddy face. Is the water cut off? (Sits at table.)

M.—Is my face really dirty? Mrs. Gunn said it was, but I thought she was exagerating.

MR. S.—Not if she said it was dirty.

M.—I will wash it up a bit. (Goes L.)

MR. S.—No, leave it on there Mary. I like it that way. Dan get me a glass of buttermilk.

DAN—Yassar, Massar Slayton. (Ex. L.)

M.—Make it two, uncle Dan.

MR. S.—Well your face shows that you have been tuning up some of the engines. Find them in pretty bad shape, I reckon.

M.—All they need is just a little kindness. A hairpin here, a drop of oil there; some baleing wire for the Fords, and they will stay on the job.

MR. S.—You can do more with them than anyone else that has ever been on the place. But don't get hurt at it, Mary. (Rubs his glasses.)

M.—I wont. They appreciate kindness. Treat them right and they will work their heads off and never complain.

MR. S.—(Holds glasses up to see if they are clean) Does that apply to all motors?

M.—(Strokes his hair) To all but one. It kicks, no matter how well you treat it.

MR. S.—(Chuckles as he hooks glasses to ear) Yes, that is right. (Look at M) But I don't see how we could farm without OLD HENRY. (Looks through letters) It's true he'll back-fire when he oughn't, and he's got some other bad habits; but he's always at the picnic.

D.—(L. with two glasses on waiter) "The June-bug has the golden wing, the lightening bug the flame; Old Henry has no wings at all, but he gits there jest the same." How's dat?

M.—(Takes the glasses and gives one to Mr. S. Raises her glass) Here's bleating at you, Gimper.

MR. S.—Go to it, you little pig. (They drink, smack lips, clear throats and say "Fine". This should be done in unison. Dan takes the glasses.)

D.—(Going L.) I'll git me some of dat. (L)

MR. S.—Now let's see what is in the mail. Here are three nice fat ones for you.

M.—I hoped we would hear from Buddy today.

MRS. S.—Here it is—for your mother.

M.—I will take it to her. (L).

MR. MONDELL—(R. Dress as Mr. S.) Did that part come in the mail Mr. Slayton?

MR. S.—(Gives small package) Is this it, Bob?

MR. M.—Yes. This is it. (Mr. S. opens and reads a letter. Mr. M. opens package and goes R.)

MR. S.—O, Bob, just a minute, please. Read that. (Gives letter which he reads and returns).

MR. M.—That will be all right, with me.

MR. S.—What do you think of it?

MR. M.—Well, I am surprised that the young man wishes to come to the farm right at this time.

MR. S.—It's just a plain case of scheming to get the boy out of doing his duty. And I am surprised that Jimmy's sense of honor is no better than that. Of course I want him to come, but not like this, Bob. I'd be ashamed of him.

MR. M.—Perhaps there is some other reason why his father wants him to come to the farm.

MR. S.—I would like to believe it, but this letter is too plain. Read it I want to hear it.

MR. M.—“Dear father Slayton.”—

MR. S.—That is the first time he ever called me that. Go on.

MR. M.—“No doubt your farm help has been hard hit by the requirements of the army, and you will be glad to know that Jimmy wants to come down and help you out. If you can take him on as MANAGER it will please and flatter him beyond words; and I assure you he will in a short time prove himself indispensable to you. You may expect him Thursday. Sincerely yours, William Norwood.”

MR. S.—That word “indispensable” leaves no doubt about why he is coming.

MR. M.—I will gladly resign as manager if you wish to give him the place.

MR. S.—No you won't, Bob. I love this boy better than anything in the world; but this is one thing I will not do for him. His duty is to go like your boy did, and he must do it.

MR. M.—I can't think of your grandson as being a coward, Mr. Slayton. Perhaps he is only waiting to be called.

MR. S.—I know he is only nineteen, but why does he wish to leave Yale and become a farm manager? It is as plain as it is humiliating, Bob. And when he comes you will put him to work just as any other farm hand. If he is made of the right sort of stuff he will come through and do the right thing. Or, if not, he can't stay here. (Rises) I will write his father just that. (Goes L. meeting Mrs. M.)

MRS. M.—Roland sent his picture in uniform.

MR. S.—(Takes it) Ho, ho, ho, Isn't that fine! Looks just like Ajax defying the lightning. (Gives it to Mr. M. who comes up) You can be proud of a boy like that, Bob.

MR. M.—That is Roland, all right.

MR. S.—Show that to Jimmy when he comes. (L)

MRS. M.—Is he expecting Jimmy Norwood?

MR. M.—Yes. He will be here Thursday. And it is going to make a delicate situation.

MRS. M.—Why do you say that?

MR. M.—Mr. Slayton thinks it is a plan to keep the boy out of the army.

MRS. M.—O, surely not that.

MR. M.—I am afraid it is, Molly.

MRS. M.—Is Mr. Slayton willing for him to come under such circumstances?

MR. M.—He had no choice in the matter. Mr. Norwood simply wrote that he was coming, and asked that he be given the position of manager.

MRS. M.—What are you going to do?

MR. M.—Why I offered to resign, but Mr. Slayton says I am to remain on the job. It is going to make my position very hard, but I will do the best I can with it. You'd better tell Mary all about it, and caution her to be careful; or she will make bad matters worse.

MARY—(L. Her face clean) Daddy, Mr. Logan wants to know whether that part came.

MR. M.—Yes, I have it.

M.—Want me to put it on?

MR. M.—No, I will fix it. (R).

MRS. M.—Jimmy Norwood will be here Thursday.

M.—(Pleased) O, isn't that just grand.

MRS. M.—I am afraid you won't think so when you know why he is coming.

M.—Has Jimmy's health failed?

MRS. M.—No. He seems to be quite well. In fact he is coming with the expectation of being manager of the farm; and—well—with the idea of getting into an ESSENTIAL INDUSTRY, if you know what I mean.

M.—It is hard for me to believe he would do a thing like that; but if he thinks he can use us a convenience just let him try it.

MRS. M.—Now, Mary, you musn't forget this farm belongs to his grandfather.

M.—Gimper won't stand for it, either.

MRS. M.—That is his business. You must treat Jimmy with respect.

M.—He will get all the respect he deserves—and no more. Why, I suppose he will ship down a car-load of horses and dogs, and a high powered roadster, to amuse himself with, while I drive a tractor in the place of my brother who is following the flag. O, sure I will respect him!

MRS. M.—Sh-h. Don't let Mr. Slayton hear you.

MR. S.—Mary, will you drive me in to town? I want to mail an important letter.

M.—Be glad to, Gimper. Just wait a wee-tiny minute and I'll be ready. (L)

MRS. M.—I have a letter to go, too. (L)

MR. S.—(Takes letter from envelope and starts to sit in chair center).

JIMMY—(R. and Briskly) 'Lo, there, Gimper. I couldn't wait until Thursday: so here I am.

MR. S.—(Straightens up) So I see.

J.—Why, aren't you glad to see me, Gimper?

MR. S.—(Offers hand) Yes, Jimmy boy, I'd be glad to see you, even if you were in stripes.

J.—Ah, I knew you would be glad to have me come down and manage this big farm for you.

MR. S.—Do you think you could do that?

J.—Well, under the PRESENT circumstances I am perfectly willing to try it. (Smiles)

MR. S.—(Waits and looks at him) My boy, ordinarily there is nothing that would make me happier than to have you come to see me; but under the PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES I can't honestly say I am pleased. (Jimmy fumbles his hat)

J.—Why, didn't you get father's letter?

MR. S.—I have the answer to that letter here in my hand. And in order that you may be under no illusions I want you to read it and think it over

carefully. (Gives it) Then come to my room, and we will talk the matter over. (L).

J.—Huh. That don't sound so very promising. (Sits and reads) "Dear William: I am in desperate need of help on the farm"—(Edges to front of chair) That isn't so bad. "But the shortage is confined to COMMON laborers only"—(Takes former position) That's rotten. "The position of manager is well filled, and if it wasn't I could get a thousand men between the ages of 18 and 35 in a split second"—(Sticks two fingers in collar and pulls it down) By, Jove I am beginning to think this farming business isn't what it is cracked up to be. "If Jimmy is willing to do a farmer's work until he is needed in the army, why, let him come by all means" (Looks L. and R.) I wonder if I could get out of here without being seen. "But I want you to understand that I will under no circumstances claim that he is indispensable to me. Very truly yours, James L. Slayton." Gee! What is the matter with him, anyhow! Does he want me to get shot! (Rises) O, I can out-talk Gimper. (Looks L.) But I hate like the Dickens to try it.

D.—(L. smiling) Massar Slayton say little Massar Jimmy done come. (Holds smile)

J.—(Face straight) I am HE.

D.—(Straightens face quickly) O. 'SCUSE me. I though you was HIM.

J.—I am your man, all right, uncle Dan.

D.—(Broad smile) WELL, sir. I sho is glad to see you. (Looks him over appraisingly) And you sho has growed up into a fine lookin man. WELL, sir. I wouldn't er knowed you.

J.—You haven't changed any.

D.—Nosser. I reggin my next change 'l be on de resurectin mawnin.

J.—(Sits) Is everybody well?

D.—Yassar. And you gwine to be sprised when you see what a fine lady Miss Mary is now.

J.—Is that so? I don't suppose I would know her. Fine girl, is she?

D.—Member dat time you fell out of de apple tree and broke yo arm for her?

J.—(Looks at right wrist and twists it) Yes, I broke my good right arm for Mary.

D.—Well, when you see her now you gwine be willin to break yo' NECK for'r.

J.—O, maybe not. I am more sensible now.

D.—Yassar. I reggin you is a leetle mo sensitive den you was when you tried to keep dat calf out er de rain. Member dat? (Smile)

J.—I don't seem to remember that.

D.—Now, Massar Jimmy, shorely you aint done forgot dat you stole Miss Mary's brand new PINK PASSALL, and tried to hold it over dat calf what I done tied to a apple-tree, out dar in de ochard.

J.—Don't you ever forget anything? (Smile)

D.—I ain't never gwine to forget what happened when you walked up by de side of date little Holstein heifer and raised dat pink passall. (Grins)

J.—She showed no appreciation, did she?

D.—Nosser. But she showed plenty of SPEED.

J.—I'll say she did.

D.—Yassar. You and dat calf sho did make some rings round dat apple tree for a few seconds. Member how it wound up?

J.—Why, it WOUND UP at the apple tree.

D.—And you and dat calf was tryin to see who could ball de loudest.

J.—And then Mary came for her parasol.

D.—Yassar. And when she come up dat calf backed off a few rounds; and when I come up she went de other way and wound Miss Mary up wid

you. And dar you was, de calf, and you, and Miss Mary and her new pink passall, all wound round dat apple-tree.

J.—Aren't you forgetting something.

D.—(Seriously) Well, now, I believe dat calf did kinder trip me up whilst I was reseuin you chil'n.

J.—And then you stopped laughing.

D.—Ereose, I did. But Massar Slayton laughed ontill he took de phthisic. And do you know dat calf made de finest cow we has ever had.

J.—Is that so.

D.—And we got some of her stock yit.

J.—You can tell me about that later.

D.—All right, sir. Is you got any baggage?

J.—It's out there on the poreh.

D.—I'll take it to yo' room. (Goes right and turns) But how come you aint gone to war wid de rest of de boys, Massar Jimmy?

J.—O, ah, I'll explain that later.

D.—All right sir. Any time'l do. (R).

J.—(Rises) I've got to explain that to Gimper, too; and I might as well be about it. (Turns L. Mary enters L. She is well dressed and looks at him, waiting to be recognized. Jimmy stares at first, then smiles). O, I know who you are. You are Mary, and uncle Dan was right. (Extends hand) Don't you know me? I am Jimmy. (Holds hand extended)

M.—We didn't expect you untill Thursday.

J.—(Looks at Mary and then at his empty hand) You are not going to wait untill Thursday to shake hands with me, are you?

M.—(Takes his hand) How do you do?

J.—I feel a LITTLE bit better. (Smiles) And if you had said "Why, hello, Jimmy", I think I would feel a little bit welcome.

M.—(Releases his hand) There is a rule on this farm that not even I can break.

J.—And what is that, pray tell me.

M.—To be always respectful to the MANAGER.

J.—O, I understand.

M.—And I hope you will be good enough to give your predecessor, who happens to be my father, a job of some sort on the farm.

J.—O, we won't fall out about that. Your father is to continue his work and draw the salary. You see I am to be manager in name only until this blooming war is over. Then he may have the name as well as the job.

M.—(Looks at him seriously for a moment, then smiles) Jimmy, I have waited a long, long time for you to come back to our play-ground. And somehow I have always believed you would come. But I never thought it would be as a thief in the night to steal the happy recollections that I have kept so close to my heart since you went away. (Waits and touches each cheek with her handkerchief. Jimmy hangs his head and fumbles his hat) And I don't care if you know how it hurts me to find that the Prince Charming of my childhood is nothing—but—a conceited—coward. CURTAIN.

ACT II

SCENE—Jimmy Norwood's private office on eighteenth floor in building in Chicago, two years later. Set desk left and back. Typewriter desk right front. Chairs at each and about stage. Walls may be decorated. Doors R. and L. and window back. Miss Rand is writing on typewriter. Dan enters L. and stands with hat crumpled in hands waiting.

DAN—Good mawnin', Missus. (Bows).

MISS RAND—(Surprised) Oh! (Moves R.)

D.—Don't be skeered of me, Missus; I is jes only doin' mah dad-gondest to find a man.

MISS R.—Well, there are no men here.

D.—Dat's too bad. I thought at las' I had riv at de right destitution.

MISS R.—I think you have made a mistake.

D.—Well, it aint de fust mistake I has made since I riv in de city en stahsted lookin for 'm. And if I knowed de way out 'r dis town I suttinly would go back whar I come fum.

MISS R.—Are you a stranger in Chicago?

D.—I suttinly is; and a LOST one at dat. (Waits) He said in dis letter (Takes it from hat) dat he'd meet me at de depper.

MISS R.—(Aside) O, I feel sorry for the old man. (To him) Perhaps I can help you. Let me see the letter. (Advances and takes it).

D.—I sho will thank you if you kin.

MISS R.—(Looking at letter) Why, this is Mr. Jimmy Norwood's handwriting). "Dear Uncle Dan; If I understand your letter you wish to come to Chicago and have a little talk with me. All right, come on. The trip is on me, and I am enclosing some money herewith. Leave there on Tuesday and I will meet you at the station here Wednesday morning. If I fail to meet you and you get lost, show this letter to a policeman, and he will straighten you out, Don't fail to follow these instructions." And he signs his full name and address. I suppose you are the "Uncle Dan" referred to?

D.—Yes, ma'm, I is—if you please. (Bows).

MISS R.—(Smile) Why didn't you tell me that when you first came in?

D.—I didn't think dat 'd be no rickmendation to a fine lookin' 'Oman lack you is.

MISS R.—Thank you. And sit down. "You has riv at de right destitution". (Laugh)

D.—(Sits cautiously and mops brow with red bandana and sighs) PHEW! AT LAS'!

MISS R.—Here is your letter.

D.—You kin have it. (Fans with hat) I aint gwine to tote dat stick of dennymite narry nuther minit. It's dang'us.

MISS R.—But you may get lost again and wouldn't have anything to show the policemen.

D.—Dat's all right. I'll jes show 'm mah HEELS, lack I done las' night.

MISS R.—Why Mr. Norwood told you to keep this letter, and, if you got lost, to show it to a policeman who would STRAIGHTEN you out.

D.—Yassam, I understand. (Fans with bandana) I saw several Policemen las' night what looked lack dey wanted to do dat vey thing for me.

MISS R.—Why didn't you let them do it?

D.—'Cause, Missus, when de good Lawd gits ready for dis ole nigger to STRAIGHTEN OUT, I don' want no Policemen hangin' roun'. I want's to be in de presence of mah pastor and mah frien's.

MISS R.—(Laughs) Mr. Norwood will be sorry you have been so greatly inconvenienced.

D.—I'll git even wid him. (Smile)

MISS R.—You seem to know him quite well.

D.—Yassam, I knows Massar Jimmy purty well; and I reggin dar aint nuffin I wouldn't do for him. But do he live UP HEAR all de time?

MISS R.—Not all the time. This is his new private office. How do you like it?

D.—(Seriously) I don't like it a bit.

MISS R.—Why don't you like it?

D.—Well, in de fust place it's dang'us. It's too hard to find; and it's ontirely too high of'n de groun'.

MISS R.—It's only the EIGHTEENTH floor.
D.—(Holds tight to chair. Looks about floor and strikes it with his heel to see if it is solid). You reggin it'l hold us?
MISS R.—(Laugh) I think so. And it is delightful away up here above the city. (Goes to window) There is a beautiful view from this window.
D.—(Looks front) I'll take yo' word for 't.
MISS R.—(Raises window—or curtain. Dan flinches and grunts) It is really a beautiful view, uncle Dan. The great city spreads out far below in grand panoramas.
D.—(Same, and waive hand) Jes let 'm SPREAD. (Wait) I aint gwine to have nuffin to do wid dem PAJAMAS.
MISS R.—You may never have another opportunity to see such a sight.
D.—(Scared) You aint spectin dis buildin to fall any time soon, is you?
MISS R.—O, this building is all right. It is made of concrete and steel.
D.—Uh-uh. Dat's why it's gwine to make such a consplavication when it falls.
MISS R.—Won't you look out the window?
D.—I spec I better not.
MISS R.—If you would look out and see other buildings as high you wouldn't be afraid. There is Montgomery Ward's tower right over there. (Points out W.) You know that company, don't you? And Sears, Roebuck & Co.
D.—Yassam. I has acquaintance wid Sis Rubbock's company. Can you see HER tower, too?
MISS R.—You can get a bird's-eye view of their plant from here. Want to see it?
D.—I spec I better let de birds have it. (Waits) But I would lack to see Sis Rubbock's place.
MISS R.—Of course you would. Come on.
D.—(Tiptoes to center of stage)
MISS R.—What are you tip-toeing for?
D.—You don't spec me to b'ar all mah weight on dis EIGHTEENTH floor, do you?
MISS R.—It's solid. (Jumps up and down).
D.—(Knees tremble) DON'T do dat. PLEASE.
MISS R.—All right, I won't. Come on over.
D.—(Shades eyes) I kin see fum hear.
MISS R.—Now isn't it a grand view?
D.—It sho is a grand view. WELL SIR.
MISS R.—(Pointing sharply to her L.) The prettiest view is out this way. But you will have to come closer to see it.
D.—I'll jes take roundance on dat window. (Still looking moves in semi-circle, cautiously, to L. Stumbles over desk and grunts) Oo-h! I thought it was gone. (Takes position left of Desk and shades eyes) Now I got it. (Looks) Ain't dat fine? (Waits) What is dat blue thing? (Talks loud)
MISS R.—Lake Michigan. Pretty, isn't it?
D.—Is I really lookin' at Lake Misgum?
MISS R.—You are looking in that direction. Back this way (Points L) the great city of Chicago extends as far as you can see.
D.—Jes hol' it still a minit ontill I gits round on de udder side (Business of "roundance") (Looks) Dat sho is a eye full.
MISS R.—You will have to come closer to the window if you want the ull view.
D.—I believe I will come up to dat window; but I wants to do it in mah wn way. (Takes up straight chair and turns it across window as a guard, then looks through it). Gee, Whillikers! Dat's some town..I..bound you.

(Miss R. turns back to her desk. Dan scotches himself and cranes neck looking down into the streets below. Then looks up under shade)

MISS R.—What are you looking at now?

D.—I was lookin for some angels. (Waits, and turns to talk to Miss R. Lets chair slip down slowly) Ain't we 'bout half way to heben?

MISS R.—(Laugh) Something like that.

D.—And dis am Massah Jimmy's private office.

MISS R.—And I am his Private Secretary.

D.—Well you sho is in a PRIVATE place, all right. (Waits) But ain't you skeered to be away up hear on de top of de world wid jes him?

MISS R.—O, no, Mr. Norwood is a gentleman.

D.—Dat don't make no difference.

MISS R.—It doesn't?

D.—It aint gwine to help you none when dis buildin falls. (Turns to look out window and discovers chair has slipped. Quickly puts it back and looks out) Look, er-er-er, Miss Private Secretary, somepin is happenin down yonder.

MISS R.—What is it? (Doesn't look)

D.—Somepin is r'arin' up down dar.

MISS R.—I guess that is the new bridge over the Chicago river. It does that way often.

D.—(Faces her) Now dat's dang'us. Cain't dey hold it down?

MISS R.—(Smile) It "r'ars" up for the boats to pass. Then it settles down.

D.—(Looks) Yassam. It's SETTLIN now.

MISS R.—Watch the traffic stream across it.

D.—(Looks short space. Miss R. writes. Then D. takes chair down from window and sits in it R. of window). I ain't gwine to STREAM across no fool bridge lack dat.

MISS R.—Why, I cross it every day.

D.—Yes, and some of dese days you and a BOAT is gwine to try to use dat bridge at de same time. Den whar'l you be?

MISS R.—You are not city-broke, are you?

D.—No'm. And it wouldn't take me very long to git mah NECK broke in dis place. (Miss R. takes letter from machine to desk L)

JIMMY—(L.) Good morning, Miss Rand. (Sits at desk, leans back and removes gloves).

MISS R.—Good morning, Mr. Norwood. (Smiles).

J.—I rather expected you to tell me that the police have been calling me. (D. Looks up).

MISS R.—Not since I came DOWN.

D.—(Aside to Aud.) Came DOWN. I wonder whar she come fum.

J.—I expected them to phone that they have an old colored friend of mine who is probably lost in the city. I went to meet him yesterday morning, and again this morning, but somehow I missed him. (Miss R. goes to her desk).

D.—Why didn't you try meetin me las night?

J.—Why, uncle Dan! (Goes to him quickly and shakes hands) I could almost hug you.

D.—Not rat heah befo dis window.

J.—Move your chair over here by my desk. Where did you find him, Miss Rand?

MISS R.—Why, he just walked in.

J.—Well, I certainly am glad to find you. WHEN and at which station did you arrive?

D.—Las' night—at de MAIN station.

J.—I expected you yesterday morning.

D.—I'd a-been on time if jes hadn't a-missed mah CONVICTION at Cairo. Dat throwed me late.

J.—How did you find your way in the city?

D.—I didn't find it. I LOST it.

J.—These streets are not like the lanes on the farm, are they?

D.—I kin handle de streets all right, but O, dese SKY-SCRAPPERS. (Shakes his head).

MISS R.—(Turns facing them) Why they are no trouble—if you use the elevator.

D.—Is dat the thing that slides up and down de chimney? (J. and Miss R. laugh).

MISS R.—Yes. You should have used it.

D.—(Chuckles, head bowed) I DID.

MISS R.—Saves a lot of time, doesn't it?

D.—If you could manage to jump out of de thing at de right time, it mought; (Waits) But I could make better time climbin' a greased pole.

J.—How did you know to take the elevator?

D.—I didn't KNOW. If I had I wouldn't a-took it. I was jes lack a skeered sheep. I come in de buildin wid a passle of folks what was in a hurry, and I saw 'm gittin in a little iron cage. I kinder pulled back, but a man in a unifoam—I reggin he's a army officer—said "Step lively, ole man, and git in". Dats whar I acted a fool. I got in. Den dat officer shot de doah, and PULLED DE TRIGGER. (Imitates).

MISS R.—And the car went up.

D.—Jes lack a sky-rocket. (Imitates). And de las' thing I members was somebody standin over me countin me out.

MISS R.—They were calling their floors. You should have done that.

D.—I didn't have no floors to call. (Waits) And if I had a-had, how was I goin to call 'm when I done swallowed mah tongue?

J.—How did you finally get off?

D.—Well, sir, when I finally come to (Waits) de doah was open and some folks was gittin out; but afore I could git mah knees to workin dat officer pulled de trigger ergin. Den it stopped ergin and all de folks got out ceptin me and dat General. He looked at me, and I said "Good mawnin, Boss". Den he close de doah, an, an, O, Lawd! (Close eyes)

J.—The bottom fell out.

D.—It most suttinly durn did. (Waits) And when I woke up we had another load and was off ergin.

MISS R.—And you made the second trip?

D.—The second, Yassam. I made forty fo' round trips wid de General. Den he axed me if I had a SEASON TICKET.

MISS R.—What did you say to that?

D.—I tole him I was jes waitin for de whistle to blow and stop dat fool-ishness. He seed mah embassment and we talked it over. Den I showed him dat letter and he vey kindly showed me in.

MISS R.—You would like the elevator when you get used to the sensation.

D.—(Mopping brow) I got enough sentation to do me de res' of mah life.

MISS R.—You will have to go down again.

D.—Not on dat EVAPORATOR. I'll jes jump out of dat window and be thu wid it.

J.—How long will you be in the city?

D.—Jes long enough to tell you somepin. Does you want her (Indicates Miss R.) to hear it?

MISS R.—(Goes out R. smiling)

J.—All right, now, uncle Dan. What is it?

D.—(Serious) It's about Miss Mary.

J.—I hope she is well and happy.

D.—Yassar, she's well; but she ain't hardly smiled since you went away two years ago.

J.—(Waits, slowly marking on desk) Yes, I know she must be very sad over the death of her father and the fact that her brother didn't come back with the boys. I am sorry for her.

D.—Den, if you is sorry for Miss Mary, why don't you never come back and tell her so?

J.—There are several reason why I can't do that; and you wouldn't understand any of them.

D.—Now, I'd try mighty hard.

J.—I know you would. And I'll say this much to you, uncle Dan. I think your Miss Mary is the finest girl I ever saw. In the three months I spent down on the farm she made a man of me. And all she made is hers; but I'm afraid she hasn't forgot how small a thing she made it out of—a "conceited coward". I've done everything I could to make amends, and I promise you, my old black friend, if ever I can feel that I have regained my place as the "Prince Charming" of Mary's heart, I shall surely not lose it again.

D.—Now. Massar Jimmy, tell me dis, and den I'll go back to de farm. If you ain't done gained yo' place as Miss Mary's Prince Charmer, why did she cry dat night when I got back fum de station and tole her you done gone? Why did she cry dat day when de papers said you was wounded? And why did Massar Slayton sit out dar on de Po'ch a long time wid his arm round her dat day las' Spring when he come back fum up heah and tole her you boun' to die? And why—

J.—(Smile) That's enough, uncle Dan. I am coming back to the farm as soon as possible. And I wish I could stay there as long as I live.

D.—Dat sho will be nice. When you comin'?

J.—I don't know. Tomorrow is my twenty first birthday. Perhaps I can manage to celebrate it as I want to.

D.—(Rises) Now when you comes down don't you say nuffin bout me bein heah, 'cause dey thinks I went to see some of mah folks.

J.—I won't forget. This is OUR secret.

D.—Dat's right. And now if you'll he'p me git to mah train I'll pull out.

J.—Mother would like to see you.

D.—I sho would like to see de Missus, but she mought forgit and say somepin sometime.

J.—I never thought of that. All right, we will drop down on the elevator and get a taxi.

D.—(Grunts) I done clean forgot about dat evaporator. Ain't dar no stair-case no whar?

J.—O, yes, if you prefer it.

D.—I much prefers it. You go on down de chimney and I'll meet you down at de FIAH-PLACE. (CURTAIN.)

ACT III

SCENE—Breakfast room in home of William Norwood in Chicago, next morning. Table in center with chairs for five persons. Davenport R. and back. Small serving table L. and back. Flat bowl of flowers on table, and plates and silver, and glasses. The bowls of berries are brought in and placed in plates. All characters, except Dr. Bruce, are dressed for breakfast, and eat daintily.

FLO—(R. Full of life) Well, mother, are all the servants on strike again?

MRS. NORWOOD—(Arranging flowers at table) No. I am the servant this morning. I wanted Jimmy to eat his twenty first breakfast out of my own hand. Just be patient. (L).

FLO.—O, I forgot his present. (Goes R. meeting Marjory) Did you remember to bring your gift Marjory?

MARJORY—(R) O, yes, I have it. (Shows small box and places it at his plate.)

FLO.—I will run up and get mine. (Starts)

MARJ.—Where is mother?

FLO.—In the kitchen. She is doing the serving act, in honor of the occasion. What do you know about that?

MARJ.—A service of love, I guess.

FLO.—Something like that. (R)

MRS. N.—(L. With tray filled with small bowls of berries) Good morning, Marjory.

MARJ.—Good morning mother. Let me help you. I would like a part in the ceremonies. (assists Mrs. N. in placing bowls in plates). Sings a ditty as she works). Why don't you sing, mother? It makes the work lighter.

MRS. N.—It wouldn't make me forget that time is robbing me of my babies.

MARJ.—(At serving table) There you go, mother dear, garnering your grain of sadness, instead of heaping up the joys of life. (Comes up to her face). Why, goodness me. You look as if you were about to cry. I imagine if I were a boy, and arriving at the splendid age of twenty one I should want it to be a joyous occasion.

MRS. N.—Don't be alarmed my child. I shall not spoil his birthday with a shower of tears—no matter how much I feel like it.

MARJ.—Well, straighten up that face then; for I can see tears in the offing. (Smile).

MRS. N.—The tears in the offing are the tears that burn, Marjory. You will understand what I mean when you see your own boy reach his twenty first milestone, and realize that you must turn back and let him go on over the hill of life without you. (L. with Tray)

FLO—(R. with small box) Now I am ready for the gent. (Places it at his plate). I hope he likes my gift.

MARJ.—Flo, mother is on the verge of tears.

FLO—Why does she always celebrate a birthday and a wedding with that verge of tears stuff?

MARJ.—She says it is a mother's secret. She has just been explaining it to me, and it is really very beautiful.

FLO—Well, now, would you mind passing the explanation along to me?

MARJ.—(Goes L) O, you wouldn't understand.

FLO—Am I as stupid as that?

MARJ.—(Turns) Who said you were stupid?

FLO—Nobody, but you.

MARJ.—You misunderstood me. Let me explain. When I said you would not understand I meant that what mother said was too serious to be appreciated by anyone whose heart is young, and necessarily more or less—ah—shallow. Or, in other words, a deep emotion cannot hide itself in a shallow heart—if you get me.

FLO—I get you. Go on Grandma.

MARJ.—(Sits at table) Don't be offended, Flo. I didn't understand her myself. She says we cannot know how she feels until we are much, much older.

FLO—I accept your apologies.

MARJ.—Apologies?

FLO.—Yes, I accept them. But still I don't understand why mother should be sad. After all that has happened to poor Jimmy I think she should be glad to have him with us, birthday, or no birthday. (Goes to serving table). This may be his last one.

MARJ.—Why do you say that? The doctors say he is entirely well.

FLO.—I know they do. And they said when he came back from France that he could never walk again. Now he is walking as good as anybody. Why, it is plain enough for even you to see that one cannot depend on what the doctors say.

MARJ.—O, my goodness! Such wisdom.

FLO.—I may be ever so young and silly, but I can see that Jimmy has a war wound much worse than any physical hurt he has suffered. His spirit is broken. He is not the same carefree and jolly Jimmy who went out of this house two years ago.

MARJ.—Well, doctor, what is the trouble?

FLO.—(Drawing down the corners of her mouth and pretending to twist a mustache). Well, now, I would say, ahem, ah, we have not found the cause. And when we do, gentlemen, we will find that this trouble is, ah, superinduced by, well, let us say, some little girl who came into his life right at a time to produce a heart lesion. Ahem.

MARJ.—O, don't be silly, Flo. If that were true he would have some pictures, or letters, or something to show for it.

FLO.—How do you know but that he has a picture away down deep in his heart somewhere?

MARJ.—He has never said anything to indicate that there is any such girl.

FLO.—Perhaps he wasn't understood.

MARJ.—What do you mean?

FLO.—Now just turn back a few months, and I will tell you something. Are you ready?

MARJ.—Quite, Miss Clairvoyant.

FLO.—Do you recall one day when he was delirious and called for some one?

MARJ.—O, that was a horrible day.

FLO.—I admit it was horrible, all right; but that isn't the joke.

MARJ.—I didn't see any JOKE about it.

FLO.—The joke is on you, Marjory. Poor Jimmy's fevered soul was crying for MARY, and they took you in. Did you satisfy him? You did not.

MARJ.—Well, you are the limit.

FLO.—Again I thank you.

MARJ.—Just how did you get your power of divination?

FLO.—I have a wee gee board.

MARJ.—For the self-respect of the family I beg you not to make public any of the weird things your far-seeing eyes may behold.

FLO.—Aw, let up on that Greater-Than-Thou stuff, will you? We are discussing Jimmy, and I modestly give it as my humble opinion that all this talk about shell shock and war effects do not explain the great change that has come over him. The only son and heir of a modern wealthy man does not surround himself with books and magazines on farming and country life, all for nothing. Neither does he blow cold every time the mothers of marriageable daughters try to impress him. You may call it wee gee board, or what not, but I give it as my opinion that some secret influence is at work in Jimmy's life.

MARJ.—Well, Flo, I didn't know you could be so serious.

FLO.—Don't let it shock you, my dear.

MARJ.—Stay serious. I want to hear more.

FLO.—Well, take this for instance. One day last winter when snow and ice were over everything, I went into his room and found him gazing out the

window. I said, "Beautiful, isn't it?" He looked at me with his eyes beaming and said, "I was just thinking of Gimper's sheep, and wondering how he manages to keep them warm on a day like this!"

MARJ.—You mentioned their wool, I guess.

FLO.—No, I said something about that being the business of the farm hands, and, as if he meant it, he said, "I'd love to be there to help them. But that's a man's job, Flo, and I am afraid I shall never be able to do a man's job any more." O, it is plain enough to me that the FARM IS CALLING JIMMY.

MARJ.—Or some pretty farm maiden.

FLO.—Well, if any maiden at all is calling him, it is not the one we want him to marry.

MARJ.—Maybe you are right, Flo. (Picks up package at his plate). I wonder what mother is giving him today.

FLO.—She has kept it a secret; but of one thing you may be certain, she is giving him her wonted affection in large measure.

MARJ.—I wonder what father will give him.

FLO.—O, something nice—and a chunk of advice. (L).

MR. NORWOOD—(R) Good morning, Marjory. (Sits at R. of table and takes up paper at his plate, cutting through to market page).

MARJ.—'Morning, dad. See Jimmy's gifts?

MR. N.—(Reading) Yes, yes. Very nice.

MARJ.—Why don't you rave over them?

MR. N.—(Same) I will rave when the bills come in. (Marj. snickers) By George, if wheat keeps this up I feel sorry for the lambs on the Chicago Board of Trade. (Smiles).

MARJ.—O, forget the old stock quotations just this morning, can't you?

MR. N.—I don't want these berries. Tell Parker to bring me a grape fruit.

MARJ.—Now, daddy, you must eat the berries, whether you want them or not. Mother is doing the serving this morning.

MR. N.—Such nonsense. O, well, I hope she doesn't burn the toast. (Reads).

MARJ.—I will tell her you have come down. (L).

MRS. N.—(L. with napkins, which she lays at plates. Spreads J's. over his presents). Well, daddy, our boy is a man, now, isn't he?

MR. N.—O, yes, and I guess he feels it. (He says this indifferently and turns page).

MRS. N.—You know just how he feels, don't you?

MR. N.—(Still reading). O, yes, I know how he feels. (Chuckles). But let him enjoy it. He won't ever feel so important again.

MRS. N.—Are you sure of that? (Smiles).

MR. N.—Absolutely. Nothing to equal it.

MRS. N.—(Sits at his L. leaning on table). I didn't see how important you looked on your twenty-first birthday. (Smiles). But twenty-one years ago today, when you held little Jimmy in your arms for the first time—well, you looked a little IMPORTANT then.

MR. N.—(Lays paper down and looks at her and smiles). Guess I did. Helen. Guess I did. I was very happy that day.

MRS. N.—I remember it very well; for it is the only day in our lives that you seemed to care more for your home than for business.

MR. N.—O, no, Helen. I may have seemed indifferent, but it is just because I had to give all my time to other matters. I have made a fortune for you and that should be enough.

MRS. N.—It isn't, William. I know you have given me the social position and prestige that go with wealth, but something is lacking still. And that something you can never give me as long as you sacrifice your life to the sordid business of merely making money.

MR. N.—Well, what would you have me do?

MRS. N.—Something that includes me, dear.

MR. N.—All right, old girl, as soon as I can train Jimmy to take my place I promise you to quit business and play with you at anything you may desire. He starts this training today. (Takes folded sheet from pocket). Here is a transfer to him of my seat on the Chicago Board of Trade, and when he reaches the office this morning he will find all signs reading "William Norwood & SON". (Smiles).

MRS. N.—Is that your birthday present?

MR. N.—Yes. I want him to begin his career today, and make it a great one.

MRS. N.—I am afraid Jimmy isn't going to like the work as well as you do.

MR. N.—That is no reason why he should be relieved of his duties and obligations, is it?

MRS. N.—Do you think this is his DUTY?

MR. N.—I certainly do. You want him to succeed, don't you?

MRS. N.—Of course I do. But it does seem to me that he could gain success in other ways in which there is more room for a little—O, I can't express just how I feel.

MR. N.—Look here, Helen! This is a matter of cold steel business, and sentiment has no place in it. Jimmy, like all young fellows, has a lot of crazy ideas, and, if let alone, would waste the best part of his life experimenting with them. It is my plain duty to prevent this; and I sincerely hope you will not make it harder for me by letting him feel your sympathy. Just leave him in my hands, won't you?

MRS. N.—(Rises) We disagree, but of course, your judgment is best; (Meaningly) for I am only his mother, you know, and perhaps blind to his best interests. (L).

MR. N.—(To Aud.) When they talk that way, it means a fight, and you'd better look out.

JIMMY—(R) Good morning, father.

MR. N.—(Rises and shakes hands) Why, good morning son. Let me be the first to congratulate you on this momentous occasion.

J.—Thank you. Thank you, very much. (Crosses to meet Mrs. N., who is smiling).

MRS. N.—Happy birthday, my boy. (Takes his face in both her hands and kisses him. Looks at him then bows head on his shoulder. J. pats her head and is quiet short space. Then turns to look at his father, who quickly turns front and coughs in his hand. Mrs. N. goes to serving table).

MARJ.—(L. with bowl of sugar) Behold, young man, I bring a bowl of sugar as an emblem of my heart's desire to sweeten all your sorrows.

FLO.—(L. with pitcher of cream) And, not to be outdone, I bring a pitcher of pure cream, and I trust you will interpret this humble act to mean that I wish you the best of everything. (They advance to table).

MR. N.—Come on, son, with a speech.

J.—I have no speech to make, but I do think it is a clever idea to put sugar and cream on two such beautiful peaches. (Bows. All laugh).

MARJ.—Now, just for that we wish you a happy birthday, don't we, Flo?

FLO.—Sure! We are glad to have another MAN in the house. (Goes up to J. and draws her finger across his lip). But I say, Jimmy, I thought MEN had whiskers.

J.—Aw, go on, Flo. Give me time.

MARJ.—And they do say if you keep the DOWN cut off a beard will finally come.

FLO.—But he hasn't even got the down.

J.—Aw, I HAVE, too. (Embarrassed).

MARJ.—Of course you have. Let me feel it. (With a white powder which she has concealed on her finger she paints his lip white, then stoops toward left and calls, Kitty, kitty, kitty).

J. What is the joke?

MRS. N.—(Comes up with napkins and thoroughly cleans his lip. Don't let them guy you, son. You have as many whiskers as they have.

MR. N.—O, ho-ho-ho. How about breakfast?

FLO.—That is what I say. Let's eat. (They sit at table—Mrs. N.—L: Marjory, Jimmy and Flo, in order named at back. Mr. N.—R. All but J. eat their berries—just a few of them between speeches. J. removes napkin and discovers gifts).

J.—Ah, is this an extra course?

FLO.—Extra and individual. (Takes berries).

J.—(Takes up stick pin and admires it). My, that is a beauty. (Takes card from box and read it, turning to MARJ.) Thanks, Marjory. That is mighty nice; but I fear you gave your allowance a mighty wrench to buy it.

MARJ.—Well, it did very nearly bankrupt me, but at that it isn't good enough for you.

MRS. N.—It is beautiful.

J.—It certainly is, Marjory, and you have ALL of my appreciation.

FLO.—Is that so? (Takes up her gift) If you have no more appreciation you get no more gifts. So there. (Holds box away).

J.—All right, Flo. The gift in your hand, whatever it is, is small compared with knowing that you value my appreciation.

FLO.—Are you trying to outwit me?

J.—I couldn't do that, I am sure.

FLO.—Just for that you may have it.

MR. N.—Pretty good, Jimmy.

FLO.—How's that! (With-holds box).

MR. N.—Why Jimmy traded you a cheap compliment for a \$1,000 ring. I—stop kicking me in the shins, Flo.

FLO.—Well, you stop telling secrets, then.

MR. N.—Well, now I say ring, it may be a wrist watch or a wagon. The point is that he got something for nothing. (Smiles).

FLO.—That is all right. I'll get it back on MY birthday, WON'T I, Jimmy? Here.

J.—(Takes the ring from box) Phew! It caused quite an argument, but it is worth it, Flo, and I thank you. And let me say, girls, these diamonds, as brilliantly beautiful as they are, are but counterfeit presentments of the donors.

MARJ.—(Arm round his chair and head on his shoulder) You dear old buddie-boy!

FLO.—Here, let me in on that, will you. (Takes same position as M.)

J.—(His hands up to their heads, and looking down) Your goodness overwhelms me. (Waits) And if indeed I am a man I suppose I should act and talk like a man.

FLO.—Now listen, everybody. Jimmy is going to talk like a man. (Turns eyes to Mr. N.)

MR. N.—(Finger to lips and frowns at her).

FLO.—I meant to say, Jimmy dear, that you—ah—ah—yes—yes. That's it.

J.—That is all right, Flo.; but you mustn't expect too much of me all at once.

FLO.—Now, Jimmy, forget my rudeness and say what is in your dear old heart.

J.—I was only going to say that I feel sorry for the boy who is not bolstered up with the purifying love of two good sisters.

MR. N.—(Waits) That goes for mother, too, doesn't it, son?

J.—(Feelingly and slowly, smiling at her) Yes, of course it does. (To his father) And it goes for you, too, father. (Girls up).

MR. N.—(Looking round his plate) Ahem! Ah—pass me the cream, Helen.

MRS. N.—Where is it, Marjory?

MARJ.—Have you seen it, Flo.?

FLO.—What, the cream? Sure. Here it is at father's plate. Who wants it?

MRS. N.—Your father. (Smiles).

FLO.—What do you want with it? You have eaten all your berries.

MR. N.—O, I just wanted to have it ready for the coffee. (Shrugs shoulders).

MARJ.—Now for mother's gift. I am anxious to know what it is. (All are quiet).

J.—(Takes out Bible and holds it open on his hand. Takes out card and reads it silently. Then smiling at Mrs. N.) All right, mother. I promise.

MARJ.—Promise what.

FLO.—Yes. No secrets today, remember.

J.—It is no secret at all. In this little note, after assuring me her prayers will follow me all the days of my life, mother expresses the hope that I will always make my decisions of right and wrong by the light of this Holy Book. And I promise her to do that. (Replaces book).

MARJ.—That won't be easy to do in these days of selfishness, will it, father?

MR. N.—On Sunday, only—unless he is content to be no better than the AVERAGE MAN.

J.—(Takes pencil and writes it on box).

MARJ.—(Takes box and reads) THE AVERAGE MAN.

FLO.—Who is he, I wonder.

J.—He is neither pauper nor prince; nor serf nor moneyed king; nor saint nor sinner, nor any such thing. For every fault he has a virtue, and for every failure an abiding faith in better things. And my hat is off to the honest to goodness AVERAGE MAN.

MR. N.—Is he your ideal man?

J.—I admire him, yes sir. Don't you?

MR. N.—No. I use him. (Smile) Just as I want you to do. Do we get any more breakfast, Helen?

MRS. N.—(Rise) In just a moment. (Girls assist in removing bowls).

J.—Take mine, too, Flo. I do not care for any fruit. (Mrs. N. and the girls L.)

MR. N.—(Studies J., who is thoughtfully marking on table with fork) Well, Jimmy, I guess you are thinking I am the only one who did not care enough to bring you a gift today.

J.—O, no. I don't feel that way.

MR. N.—Didn't you expect something?

J.—I shouldn't have been surprised, sir.

MR. N.—(Takes paper from pocket) You are a man now, Jimmy, but you are still my boy; and I am expecting great things of you.

J.—I hope I shan't disappoint you.

MR. N.—You won't if you take my advice and buckle right down to business. And I know you will do that. (Gives paper). There is my seat on the Board. It is worth \$25,000, and with it goes a junior partnership in the new firm of William Norwood & Company. (Smiles). That is my birthday gift, son. (Jimmy looks at paper thoughtfully for a moment). Why so serious? I thought you would be overjoyed.

J.—Thank you, father. I feel honored to have so much of your confidence, and will try not to disappoint you.

MR. N.—You won't, I am sure. I will help you over the rough places and teach you how the game is played. Then when you can go it alone I shall turn it over to you and take a rest.

FLO.—(R) Dr. Bruce to see you, father.

MR. N.—(Rises) Tell mother I don't care for any more breakfast. (R)

FLO.—What did he give you, Jimmy?

J.—He didn't give me anything, Flo.

FLO.—(Takes paper) What is this?

J.—That is what he offers me in exchange for my own way of living and happiness.

FLO.—Going to take him up, aren't you?

J.—I suppose I must.

FLO.—You want to live on a farm, don't you?

J.—(Quickly) Why do you say that?

FLO.—O come, Buddy, and tell little sis all about it. Maybe I can help you.

MRS. N.—(L. with plate of rolls) Will you get some coffee cups, Flo?

FLO.—Father said he didn't care for more breakfast. (L)

J.—Sit down, mother. I want to talk to you.

MRS. N.—(Sits) All right, son. What is it?

J.—You know father's plans, don't you?

MRS. N.—Yes, I know it all.

J.—Do you think it could be arranged for me to take a vacation first?

MRS. N.—You should ask him about that.

J.—I'd rather ask you and let you ask him. (Smile) You can out-talk him. I can't.

MRS. N.—Do you need a vacation?

J.—No. I am well enough to go to work, but there is something I would like to do first.

MRS. N.—Tell me what it is.

J.—Well, I—I—O, it's no use.

MRS. N.—Jimmy, you are not keeping a secret from mother, are you?

J.—Yes, but I will tell you. I do not want to spend my life as father has. And I would give anything if I could go down and stay with Gimper a while—at least until I have forgotten some of the things I have been through.

MRS. N.—Is Mary Mondell still down there?

J.—You'd like Mary, mother. (Embarrassed).

MRS. N.—Tell me all about it, son.

J.—That's all.

MRS. N.—If it could be arranged for you to go down there for a while would you promise to come back and do as father wishes?

J.—Do you want me to do that?

MRS. N.—I want you to be happy above everything else in the world.

J.—Then let me go down to Gimper's. I love every acre of his big fine farm, and his good honest neighbors. And the rain and the sunshine, down there. And as for Gimper—why, Gimper is a prince, mother.

MRS. N.—Dear old father, and dear old farm. I love them both just as you do, Jimmy.

J.—Then why can't we show it more?

MRS. N.—My first duty is to my home, son, and I am not sure but that yours is, too.

J.—All right, mother. It's the one pure wish of my heart, but if I must give it up I can.

DR. BRUCE—(R) Hello.

MRS. N.—Wny! It's Dr. Bruce. Good morning. I am surprised to see you so early.

DR. B.—Now, you shouldn't be surprised to see your family physician at ANY hour. ESPECIALLY on a birthday. (Offers hand to Jimmy) And may I wish you a very happy day today, sir.

J.—Thank you, Dr. Bruce. I owe it to you.

DR. B.—Well, I pulled you through all right, and I am mighty glad to see you in such fine shape to begin the work your father has just been telling me about. With such advantages you should step out at a lively gait.

MRS. N.—Won't you have a cup of coffee? I made it myself.

DR. B.—Now I bet it is good.

J.—I will bring you one. (L).

MRS. N.—(Sits on davenport R.) Sit down, Dr. Bruce. I want a consultation.

DR. B.—(Sits by her) All right.

MRS. N.—Do you think Jimmy is strong enough to undertake this work now?

DR. B.—If I didn't I certainly wouldn't let him do it.

MRS. N.—Then you couldn't conscientiously advise his father to wait a while?

DR. B.—I see no reason why I should.

MRS. N.—My boy has suffered a great deal, you know, Doctor.

DR. B.—But that is all over with now, and I do not anticipate any evil effects from strict application to business. I will promise you to watch him closely.

MRS. N.—O, very well. Just forget that I mentioned it. (Flicks speck from dress).

DR. B.—(Studies her, stroking his chin and smiling) You might tell me just why you mention this matter.

MRS. N.—What's the use? If it can't be arranged for him to live a little of his life in his own way before he sells himself to money-making, as his father has done, why, that is the end to the matter.

DR. B.—O, that is different again. I was talking about his HEALTH.

MRS. N.—What is health without happiness, Dr. Bruce? And down on his grandfather's farm he would have both.

DR. B.—You mean to live down there?

MRS. N.—He could do much worse.

DR. B.—And marry some country girl?

MRS. N.—(Smile) I came from that farm.

DR. B.—I know you did; and I know that you think it is the greatest place on earth. It is perfectly natural that Jimmy should love it, too; but whether he is a broker or a farmer is not for me to decide. (Smiles).

MRS. N.—If you had a heart as big as a flea you could decide it.

J.—(L. with coffee on waiter) Here you are doctor. (Mrs. N. hands cup to Dr. B.)

DR. B.—You make a very fine maid, Jimmy.

J.—La la, Monsieur. (Courtesy).

DR. B.—(Raises cup) To mother and son. (Drinks some) My! that is fine. (Drinks more and returns cup to J.) Here, hold that out and let me see your nerve. (J. obeys).

DR. B.—(To Mrs. N.) Steady as a jug! (Rises) Now, let me listen to your heart. (Lays head on breast and listens) With a heart like that you ought to have fine health, my boy. (Mrs. N. makes face at Dr. B. and looks out L. Dr. B. looks after her and smiles) And with a mother like that you ought to be very happy.

J.—Thank you, doctor.

MRS. N.—(R) Well, it is time to go to the office. Get your hat, Jimmy. I will let you ride down with me this morning. (Puts on gloves).

J.—In just a moment, sir. (R).

DR. B.—That's a fine boy, William.

MRS. N.—They don't come any finer, Tom.

DR. B.—It's a pity you can't let him get a little stronger before you yoke him up.

MR. N.—Why, you told me he was entirely recovered. And only this morning you said—

DR. B.—I know I did. I say so now; but it wouldn't be a bad idea to let him go down to his grandfather's farm and get tough.

MR. N.—O, not down there, Tom. I sent him to that farm once, and the next time I heard from him he was in France.

DR. B.—Well, you have forgiven him for that, haven't you?

MR. N.—Forgiven him! Why that is why I am so proud of him. He did his duty like a man, and—I must say it—in spite of me.

DR. B.—Well, a place that can make a man out of a spoiled boy is a good place for him, and I don't think you would go wrong to take my advice and send him down for a few weeks.

MR. N.—O, well, if you say so, all right. I have an important conference at 10 o'clock. Explain it to Jimmy. (Turns R.)

J.—(R. hat in hand) I am ready.

MR. N.—After talking to Dr. Bruce I have decided it would be better for you to go down to the farm and get good and tough.

J.—(Pleased) Thank you, father. That is a birthday present worth having.

MR. N.—I will see you before you go. (R.)

J.—Thanks, a thousand times, Dr. Bruce.

DR. B.—Don't thank me, Jimmy. Thank the one who did it.

J.—Then who did it? (Both serious).

DR. B.—Who always does most for a boy?

J.—(Smiling and slowly) Why, that would be his MOTHER, of course.
CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

Scene Same as Act I. Three Months Later.

Mr. Slayton in rocking chair, reading.

DAN—(R) Massar Slayton, dem chil'n is fussin agin, out yonder.

MR. S.—(Chuckles) Not serious, is it?

D.—De argumint is PURTY hot.

MR. S.—Which one is right?

D.—Aaint neither one of 'm right.

MR. S.—What is it about this time?

D.—Mister King brung dat new colt over and den it stahted. Massar Jimmy say he gwine to make a pacin hoss; and Miss Mary she say he gwine to trot.

MR. S.—Which one did you agree with?

D.—Shucks, I got more sense den to agree wid eder one of 'm: But Miss Mary said you would agree wid her.

MR. S.—O, she did, did she.

D.—Yassar. Heah dey come.

M.—(R. leading J. by ear) Come on to court and I will prove to you that he will make a trotting horse. (Jimmy says "Pacing horse." Mary says "Trotting horse," ad lib).

D.—Better sep'rate 'm, Massar Slayton.

MR. S.—Here, here. What's the matter?

M.—(Releases J. and he crosses to L). That colt of Mr. King's Gimper—

J.—He is going to PACE, isn't he?

M.—Not so. He is going to TROT, I tell you. (J. says "Pace"; M. "Trot" ad lib.)

MR. S.—Wait a minute. Which is which?

J.—Why its PACE.

M.—Not so. It's TROT, and you know it.

J.—What say, Gimper, pace or trot?

MR. S.—What do you say, Dan?
D.—I ain't sayin a word. You tell 'm.
MR. S.—Well, Mary, I don't think he'll trot.
J.—(Elated) Now I guess you believe me.
M.—(Makes face at him).
MR. S.—And I KNOW he won't pace.
J.—(Face straight) Sir!
M.—Why don't you laugh some more, smarty?
J.—Then what will he do?
D.—Maybe he's one of dem flyin Pegasuses.
M.—Well, I don't care what he does—just so he doesn't pace. (Sits on davenport R).
MRS. M.—(L. with sheet of paper) What is the argument about now?
MR. S.—That \$10,000 colt of King's.
M.—You saw him. Will he trot or pace?
MRS. M.—Why, his long neck, straight legs and slender body looked like a runner to me.
MR. S.—Right, Molly. You've got horse sense,
M.—(Beckons) Come on over here, Jimmy, and let's suffer together. (He starts).
MRS. M.—Here is a message for you, Jimmy. I took it over the telephone. (Give it).
J.—Thank you. (Reads) Why it is from dear old Dr. Bruce. Says he will arrive at ten o'clock. Is your car running good, Gimper?
MR. S.—Nothing to do but step on it, son. (Looks at watch) And you'll have to hurry.
J.—Want to pace along with me, Mary?
M.—No, but I'll TROT along with you.
MRS. M.—Not like that, Mary.
M.—Isn't this dress all right?
J.—(Takes her by the hand) Sure it's all right. And you don't need any hat. I want Dr. Bruce to see you just as you are. (R).
MR. S.—(At door R. looking after them) They get more happiness out of being contrary than any two people I ever saw.
MRS. M.—Yes, they argue everything. First, this morning it was the number of plows a tractor should pull. And when that colt came up they were disputing about the percentage of hens and roosters the incubator would hatch.
MR. S.—And now, I fancy, they will be arguing just how far to advance the spark to get the most out of the motor. And if we were with them we would laugh and think only of the car—forgetting how youth experiments with the living spark that drives (hand to heart) the great master motor of life. It is the way of youth, Molly, and let them enjoy it; for they can pass that way but once. It will be time enough to be serious when they begin to bury their adolescent idols and realize that they can no longer trust the glowing furnace of Youth to transmute every beautilless thing into a golden promise. Youth! Molly, Youth! It is the fairyland of life to which we all look back with pleasure and longing, and from which there comes down across the years the tender-sweet memories that old age loves best of all. (R).
D.—He ain't dade yit, is he?
MRS. M.—I hope he lives a long, long time.
D.—I does, too; case I don't know what gwine to become of I and you when he dies—onless Massar Jimmy and Miss Mary marries.
MRS. M.—Don't say that any more, Dan.
D.—Wellam. Who's dey gone to meet?

MRS. M.—An old friend of Jimmy's family. He will be here for dinner, and you must use your best style.

D.—If you'll furnish me one of yo' good chicken pies to go wid dem new peas and strawberries what I done picked urly dis mawnin, I'll promise you dat he lacks ma style.

MRS. M.—A good idea. Dress two nice young chickens and I will make the pie. (L).

D.—(Going R) LO-OK out chickens, I's acomin. (Almost collides with Mrs. G.) Escuse me, Miss Gunn. I didn't mean to bump into you. I's after a YOUNG chicken. (Places chair) Sit down, Miss Gunn. I'll tell Miss Molly you done come.

MRS. G.—Do that. I want to talk a while.

D.—(Going L.) Now, dogonit, dar goes mah chicken pie. (L).

MRS. G.—I declare to goodness, every time unpleasant things has to be told I am the one selected to do it. (Fans) But somebody should ought to tell her what the neighbors is sayin, and it might as well be me as anybody. I'll do MY duty. and then if things goes wrong she cain't blame me.

MRS. M.—(L) Why good morning, Mrs. Gunn.

MRS. G.—Ain't it hot today?

MRS. M.—I think it is pleasant.

MRS. G.—Well, it ain't pleasant to me.

MRS. M.—Would you like some cold water?

MRS. G.—No; I'm afraid to cool too fast. Sit down, Mizries Mondell. They's somethin I feel I should ought to tell you.

MRS. M.—You wouldn't mind going to the kitchen, would you. I am expecting company.

MRS. G.—Who, I wonder.

MRS. M.—One of Mr. Norwood's friends.

MRS. G.—Avhat's his name?

MRS. M.—Dr. Thomas Mills Bruce, of Chicago.

MRS. G.—Well, he ain't no better 'n anybody else. And Mr. Norwood ain't neither, for that matter, and if I was you I'd set him down to the reg'lar fare. Is Jimmy goin off with him?

MRS. M.—I don't know, I am sure.

MRS. G.—Well, what's he comin for?

MRS. M.—I can't tell you that, either.

MRS. G.—Well, I wouldn't be surprised at nothin that happens at this house no more.

MRS. M.—Why do you say that? Has anything happened here that you do not approve?

MRS. G.—I ain't sayin nothin, but the neighbors is talkin. And that reminds me. Sit down, Mizries Mondell.

MRS. M.—I don't care to hear it, Mrs. Gunn.

MRS. G.—Well, of course, if you ain't interested in what folks is sayin about the way Mary is gallivantin round with this rich man's son who is just usin her as a plaything, and even down livin right here in the house with her, and everything, why, I reckon there ain't no need of me tellin you about it.

MRS. M.—(Smile) Not at all, Mrs. Gunn, and please don't let it worry you.

MRS. G.—O, it ain't a-worryin me none. It's the neighbors that is upset about it. And what tickles me so is the way YOU have got 'm fooled. (Playing up) And do you know, Mizries Mondell, I think it is plumb down cute the way you air settin yore cap for old man Slayton.

MRS. M.—Don't stop until you have finished.

MRS. G.—That's about all. I just wanted to let you know you ain't got

me fooled none. And I think it is real romantic to marry the man you have worked for all your life.

MRS. M.—If you have any more unkind things to say, please say them.

MRS. G.—Now don't git mad, just 'cause I got on to your secret.

MRS. M.—I am not mad, but I am deeply hurt to think that you could so misunderstand me. Why, I love Mr. Slayton just like a father; for he has been just that to me. And nothing you can say either to me or your neighbors, as you call them, can make me less devoted to him. As for Mary and Jimmy, that isn't any of your business, either. They are returning now and will entertain you.

MRS. G.—(Rises) Well, I'll be goin. I didn't mean to hurt yore feelins. Come over to see me sometime. (L. Mrs. M. changes positions of chairs).

M.—R. with Dr. B.) Come right in, Dr. Bruce, and meet the cook and housekeeper, my mother, Mrs. Mondell.

MRS. M.—(Offers hand) How do you do, Dr. Bruce. I am glad to meet you.

DR. B.—I am delighted to know you, Mrs. Mondell. In fact, I have known you for a long time—through Jimmy and his mother. They often mention your name, and always kindly. (G. L.)

M.—This is Gimper. Dr. Bruce—Mr. Slayton.

MR. S.—Why, I expected an OLD man. Glad to see you, Doctor How are you? (Hearty shake).

DR. B.—Fine, Mr. Slayton, thank you. And I would like to know why you expected an OLD man.

MR. S.—I don't know. Something Jimmy said.

DR. B.—I'll see the young man about that. (D. R. with bag) This is Uncle Dan, isn't it?

D.—At yo' suvvice, sah. (Bows).

MRS. M.—The doctor will occupy the east room.

D.—Yassam. (Go L) Bath hot or cold, sah?

DR. B.—Why, ah, cold, please, Uncle Dan.

D.—Yassar. (Aside to Mrs. M.) Don't forgit dat chicken pie, Miss Molly. (L).

DR. B.—Didn't he say chicken pie?

MRS. M.—Do you like them, doctor?

DR. B.—Do I like them! Why, I think it was a chicken pie that Esau cheated Jacob out of.

MRS. M.—I am making one for dinner. I hope you will not be disappointed in it. (L.)

MR. S.—I guarantee that you won't be disappointed in Molly's chicken pie. Dan says she put the chick in chicken. Sit down, Doctor. I am mighty glad you have come, and I hope you will stay a long time.

DR. B.—Thank you, but I am overdue in Chicago and must hurry on tomorrow, with Jimmy.

MR. S.—You are not going to take my boy away from me, are you?

DR. B.—His father is depending on me to say when he is physically fit. (Smile) And with the start he had when I sent him down here I expect to find him quite well.

MR. S.—When you sent him down here?

DR. B.—Yes. His father wanted to start him in business, but I learned through his splendid mother that he wanted to come down to Gimpers—isn't that what he calls you—Gimper?

MR. S.—Yes, that is what he called me when he was a little fellow. He taught it to Mary, and much to my delight, they have never improved upon it. And if you knew how happy I am to have him with me you would understand why I don't want him to leave. I don't see how I can get along without him.

DR. B.—Does he really help you manage the farm?

MR. S.—No. He manages it. And I stand back and wonder how he does it so well. Why in these three short months he has won the respect and willing obedience of every man on the place. And this is true also of the community. We will all miss him.

DR. B.—I am glad he has made himself useful.

MR. S.—Indeed he has. Why, he has shaken a lot of us old tightwads down to the tune of \$100,000 for a much-needed new school building. And there's the new bond issue for good roads. He led that fight. He has organized a troop of Boy Scouts—and they swear by him. Mary already has the girls organized. And, my! what good, wholesome times these kids have now. And he teaches a class at Sunday School. (Smile) But he had to give that up, because some of the scouts who belonged to another church wanted to change their membership. The boy thinks country life is worth living, and tries to make it what it ought to be. And if he hasn't put his whole soul into the work he is the best actor I ever saw.

DR. B.—I am glad to hear that fine report of him. And really I hate to take him away.

MR. S.—I wish he could stay with me.

DR. B.—I think I see a solution for the whole matter. May I suggest it?

MR. S.—I wish you would, Doctor.

DR. B.—You are getting old. Why not sell the farm and take life easy?

MR. S.—No. Jimmy gets this farm some day.

DR. B.—Then put it in the hands of someone you can trust and go live with Jimmy in Chicago. I am sure Mr. Norwood would welcome you, and it would make your daughter very happy.

MR. S.—I would be welcome, I know. But this is home to me, doctor. I will just stay here.

DR. B.—How long have you lived here?

MR. S.—Fifty-one years ago next January I came here with the most wonderful woman in all the world—Jimmy's grandmother. Not to this modern house, of course—just two little rooms. They are the heart of this big house, and are tucked away in the left side there for protection and safe keeping. They are my rooms, and how I thank God for the memories they contain.

DR. B.—Memory is a great blessing, isn't it?

MR. S.—It is very dear to an old man, sir. With it I am able to live over and over again the happiness of that day long ago when my good wife first came into our humble little home, and after the fashion of those times, hung two little placards on the walls. One of them read "Home Sweet Home," and the other one asked God to bless it. She cared for that little home as if she loved it, and I went afield to work for her. (Smile) They were happy days, doctor. Well, and then—of course, you know what happened them, doctor.

DR. B.—(Smile) Was it a boy or girl?

MR. S.—(Slaps his leg) The finest girl you ever saw. At least we thought so. And then for three years we were supremely happy. (Sadly) Then the boy came.

DR. B.—I didn't know you had a son.

MR. S.—(Slowly) I haven't, doctor. (Waits) I buried him in the arms of his mother (point, hand shaking) up yonder on the hill. The little girl was all I had left. I gave her every advantage and loved her better every day. Then one day Jimmy's father came and took her away. And since that day I have sometimes felt that the old homestead—no matter how much it cost me to build it—is worth just what it will bring on the market. But it is different with me, and, well, I guess I will just stay here

as long as I live. O, forgive me, Dr. Bruce, I did not mean to burden you with all these things.

DR. B.—You haven't burdened me at all, sir. It interests me greatly to find in what you say the proof of my pet theory that heredity is strongest in alternate generations. Jimmy is just like you. Talks like you, thinks like you, and looks like you. And I think it is a shame he cannot live like you.

J.—(R) Gimper, Mr. Sloan is outside. He thinks he has the culprit.

MR. S.—Excuse me, doctor. This is important. (R).

DR. B.—Anything serious, Jimmy?

J.—(Sits) Now that depends on whether Gimper finds any wool in his teeth.

DR. B.—I see. You have sheep on the farm.

J.—What would a farm be without a "Woolly Fold"? And when we find a lamb with its throat cut we look for the dog with wool in his teeth—and kill him.

DR. B.—The lambs on the Board of Trade are not so well protected, are they. (Smile).

J.—They don't deserve to be.

DR. B.—Then you think it is right to kill them off occasionally. Your father would be glad to know you feel that way about them.

J.—Don't misunderstand me. I said they do not deserve protection. I should have said they do not deserve the NAME. To call them LAMBS is a misnomer. They are nothing but little wolves skulking about with the big wolves who prey upon the profits that rightfully belong to the farmers.

DR. B.—What would your father say to that?

J.—Why, he would say the farmers couldn't get along without such services.

DR. B.—And you think they could?

J.—I THINK THE FARMERS SHOULD GET THE CLIP FROM THEIR OWN SHEEP. And I consider every strand of the golden fleece that is UNJUSTLY taken by speculators as just so much WOOL IN THEIR TEETH. So there.

DR. B.—You are for the farmers all right. But do you think you'd like to be one?

J.—I know I would, Dr. Bruce. It just exactly suits me. There is something in my blood that wants to sing every time I see a new turned furrow, or smell a field of new mown hay. (Rises) And there's the enchanting hour of dawn, when our roosters hurl their clarion voices out against the night, and our neighbors' roosters answer back, until the shadowy curtain is lifted and the sun steps grandly out upon the stage of a new day. (Smile) I love the whole day to its end, and then I love the restful quiet and contentment of the eventide. Yes, Dr. Bruce, I would like to be a farmer. (Breaks off) Now tell me what brought you down here.

DR. B.—Well, I stopped off to pick you up and take you back to Chicago.

J.—Couldn't you go on without me?

DR. B.—Not if I do my duty.

J.—What do you mean by that?

DR. B.—I am sorry to tell you, but your father's nerves are breaking, and I am afraid he is headed for a breakdown. I have ordered him to take a rest, but he only laughs at me and hangs on to the ticker tape.

J.—Poor father! He has spent his life watching that old ticker grind out its sordid story of fortunes made and lost. And I guess he will want to die with a piece of the tape in his hand.

DR. B.—And when he drops it you must take it up, my boy.

J.—Yes, I guess I must; and I am ready to go back when you say the word.

DR. B.—All right, Jimmy. We leave tomorrow. Now if you will show me my room I will get ready for that chicken pie Mrs. Mondell is making for ME.

J.—(Going L. with him) For YOU!

DR. B.—Yes. But I will give you some. (L)

J.—Now, that sounds better. (L)

MR. N.—(After short wait enters R. leaning heavily on Dan and breathing and walking with difficulty). Let me sit down, uncle, I feel very strange. (Reaches for chair, then straightens up with hand to heart and collapses. Dan tries to support him, but lets him slip to floor).

D.—Massar Jimmy! Massar Jimmy!

J.—(L) What is the matter?

D.—Yo daddy. Git a doctor quick.

J.—Dr. Bruce! For God's sake come quick. (By his father) Father, father! What on earth is the matter?

DR. B.—(L) What is it, Jimmy?

J.—O, Dr. Bruce, it is my dear old father. Please don't let him die.

DR. B.—What! (Hastily stoops back of Mr. N. and feels his heart. Mary enters R and takes pillow from davenport and places it under his head, then stands by J., who is stooped at Mr. N's. head).

J.—(Calmly) Is he dying?

DR. B.—(Is silent and leaning the better to study Mr. N's. face. Waits. Then slowly shakes his head despairingly, still looking at Mr. N.)

CURTAIN.

ACT. V.

SCENE—Same as ACT IV, and four weeks later. Flo is discovered with college annual at table.

MARJ.—(L. With box supposed to contain a bunch of chicks. If she actually has them she may dump them on table). Flo, want to see something cute?

FLO.—O, some fluffy little chicks. (Fondles them) Aren't they just darling!

MARJ.—Lots cuter than your pet goat.

FLO.—Not so. When it comes to cuteness Billy Boy has your chicks skinned all over. And it just breaks my heart to leave him.

MARJ.—Why can't we take our pets with us?

FLO.—Do you think we could manage it?

MARJ.—Why, in this day of boot-legging anything is possible.

FLO.—It isn't nice to say boot-legging.

MARJ.—It isn't?

FLO.—No. You should say boot-LIMBING.

MARJ.—Well, then, we will boot-LIMB our pets to Chicago. How shall we do it?

FLO.—Why, that's easy. We will simply— (Thinks) No, that won't do.

MARJ.—I didn't think it would.

FLO.—Mary knows everything. We will ask her.

MARJ.—(Pointing to annual) That is a good picture of her, isn't it?

FLO.—(Turning pages of book) This Vassar annual is full of them. Have you seen it?

MARJ.—Yes, and I was proud of her record.

FLO.—I'll say she copped.

MARJ.—Don't you know they were surprised to find a country girl with so much sense?

FLO.—You don't think city girls have any corner on brains, do you?

MARJ.—Well, I used to think they made the best use of what they did have.

FLO.—O, we all make mistakes. (Smile)

MARJ.—How is that?

FLO.—My dear child, don't you know that 166 per cent of the world's greatest work has been done with brains from the farm?

MARJ.—Brains may come from the farms, but the point I am trying to make is that they go to the cities.

FLO.—Let 'm go to the city. The Lord knows they need them.

MARJ.—What has this argument to do with getting our pets to Chicago?

FLO.—O, nothing, except that two city girls must enlist the brains of a country girl to get something done. (Rises) Where is Mary, anyhow?

MARJ.—If you want Mary find Jimmy.

FLO.—Then, where is Jimmy?

MARJ.—(Going L) Where Mary is. (Mrs. N. L, with trowel and small plant) Well, mother, what have you there?

MRS. N.—Just a cutting from an old rosebush. I am taking it back with me. Are you girls glad we are leaving tomorrow?

FLO.—I'm not a bit glad. I've had a big time and I want to stay longer.

MRS. N.—How about you, Marjory?

MARJ.—I am thoroughly converted, mother. I didn't like the farm at first, but I do now. And I think Lord Byron expressed how I feel about the farm when he said to a friend that he was sorry he met him so late and must leave him so soon. It's a great life, and I wish we had a place down here.

FLO.—How about yourself, mother?

MRS. N.—O, I can't tell you how happy I have been, or how sorry I am to go away.

MARJ.—Father has enjoyed it as much as anybody. Why can't we all stay longer?

MRS. N.—We just can't, dear. That's all.

FLO.—Is Jimmy going back with us?

MRS. N.—Your father hasn't said.

FLO.—Where is father?

MRS. N.—He has been gone all the morning. I guess he is bumming around the farm as usual.

MARJ.—Come on, Flo, and let's find him. (L)

MR. N.—(Comes in R. as if he heard what the girls said. He is brisk. Collar open and turned in. Mops brow and throat) Phew! It's hot this morning. (Waits) Well, mother, I see you have been digging in the dirt, as usual.

MRS. N.—Yes. I have put in a full morning. And in the parlance of the farm I have laid my roses by. (Smiles)

MR. N.—Kinder hate to leave, don't you?

MRS. N.—Well, with you and the girls and Jimmy and father all down here together it is a very happy place indeed; but it wouldn't be the same without you, and I am ready to go back with you tomorrow.

MR. N.—Helen, how would you like to have a nice country home here close to your father? Say just across the road over there in that fine grove on the Sedgwick place.

MRS. N.—If you could enjoy it with me I would like it better than anything in all this world.

MR. N.—Well then, my dear old girl, if that is the way you feel about it, why just go ahead and build the kind of home you want. The Sedgwick place belongs to YOU, and (Gives large envelope) there's your deed to it.

MRS. N.—Thank you, O, so much! But I do not want you to do this just for my sake.

MR. N.—I want a home down here, too.

MRS. N.—O, William, do you really?

MR. N.—I do with all my heart. I have found something besides my

health down here. I don't know just what it is, but it is better than anything I have ever known before, and I want to stay here and cultivate it.

MRS. N.—Why, you talk as if you mean it.

MR. N.—I am in dead earnest. I have perverted the golden rule long enough. I am now going to try to live by it a while. Until this morning I doubted whether I could play the part, but as I came along the road with that deed in my pocket I had a strange experience—not wholly unlike that which came to Paul on his way down to Damascus. Now don't laugh at me. I am going to make a confession.

MRS. N.—Laugh at you! Why, I feel more like crying for pure joy. Go on, dear, I am building a castle of happiness on every word you say.

MR. N.—I can't explain it. Something seemed to snatch by old false standard of selfishness out of my hand and throw it down at my feet, and I looked down upon it and despised it as a thing that had robbed me of the best part of my life. (Waits) Then I looked up and saw Jimmy's standard of THE AVERAGE MAN. And with a peculiar determination I laid my hands on it. There is something to it, Helen. What did he say about him?

MRS. N.—(Smiling) "He's neither pauper nor prince; nor serf nor moneyed kind; nor saint, nor sinner, nor any such thing. For every fault he has a virtue; and for every failure an abiding faith in better things. My hat is off to the honest to goodness AVERAGE MAN."

MR. N.—That is just what I promised God I would try to be—out there on the road this morning. We will go on back to Chicago, but it is only to close up shop and get ready to come back down here and see what we can do with the real job of living.

MRS. N.—(Kisses the deed) O, William, I feel sure this is the deed to great happiness. I wish I could tell you with what great joy I look forward to having you all to myself so that I can help you live this new and useful life.

MR. N.—Don't try it, old dear. Just run along and tell your father we are going to stand close by him from now on out. But send Jimmy to me. I want to be the one to tell him.

MRS. N.—All right, but it is a temptation to tell him myself. (L)

MR. N.—(Sits at table and rubs his hands) My! It feels good to acknowledge a fault. (Takes check book from table) And better to determine to correct it. (Writes check) And BEST of all to BELIEVE you can do it.

J.—(L) You wish to see me, father?

MR. N.—Yes. I want to know whether you are ready to go back to the city and make something out of yourself; or do you wish to stay down here with these CLOD-HOPPERS.

J.—Pardon me, father, but you don't speak very respectfully of a community that has given you a hearty welcome, and is sorry to see you go.

MR. N.—Answer my question.

J.—My wish is to stay here; but if it's my duty to go with you, I am ready.

MR. N.—That's good. I was afraid you would insist on showing some appreciation to your grandfather for his royal gift of 3,000 acres.

J.—I do think it is base ingratitude to leave him, but I don't insist on staying. Gimper knows I appreciate it.

MR. N.—Confound it, Jimmy! Why don't you show some fight! Why don't you argue with me! Why don't you tell me I am a narrow, merciless old blind fool, or something?

J.—Why, why, father! I don't understand.

MR. N.—(Smiling) Jimmy, you are all right. You have whipped me to a frazzle, and there's my hand. You can understand that, can't you?

J.—You mean that I can live my life in my own way?

MR. N.—Just as your big honest heart dictates it to you, my son.

J.—(Heartily) Thank you, father. Your approval was all I lacked to make me happy.

MR. N.—I approve and admire it, my boy; and I am going to try a little of it myself.

J.—I wish you would. We farmers kinder have a claim on you anyway. (Smile)

MR. N.—I know my fortune came out of their pockets—if that is what you mean.

J.—O, not just that, exactly, but—

MR. N.—It's the truth; but from now on I am going to help you play the farmers' end of the market.

J.—(Pleased) Do you mean it?

MR. N.—Yes, by George, I do. I am through with taking profits that rightfully belong to men who dig them out of the soil. You have shown me a bigger and better plan, and I mean to back it to the limit. And here is a small earnest of my good intentions. (Gives check).

J.—\$30,000. What is this for?

MR. N.—It is just a poor expression of the pride I felt this morning when I passed where they are building that magnificent school and learned that it is to be named the NORWOOD school in honor of my son's efforts to help build it.

J.—I didn't know of that honor.

MR. N.—Well, it's yours, all right, and from what they say you deserve it. I just wanted to show my appreciation.

J.—Is that what this check is for?

MR. N.—Yes. I want you to present it to your Board in your own name, and request that it be used for the construction of two nice homes close by that school for those who shall give so much of their lives to making it a great blessing to the community—the Superintendent and Principal. (Note: Change to suit faculty).

J.—It's a great idea, and a handsome gift. And I thank you for the community. And if this is a sample of how you mean to help me play the farmers' end of the market I feel sure you mean business.

MR. N.—I heard you tell a fellow the other day that supporting a good school is the best evidence of citizenship. I want to be a good citizen and NEIGHBOR.

J.—Neighbor!

MR. N.—Wouldn't you like me for a neighbor?

J.—Why, the best in the world. But that is too good to be true.

MR. N.—I own a farm down here—the Sedgwick place. Why not live on it?

J.—You are not joking with me, are you?

MR. N.—No, Jimmy. I'm coming back to stay. And when I do I will help you realize your great idea of a Farmers' Warehouse. And we need a Creamery, and better roads, and better live stock. And there are many other things we can help our good neighbors do to make country life worth living. But I will tell you all about that later. (Goes R).

J.—(Starts L, but turns) O, father, just a minute, please.

MR. N.—(Turns) All right. What is it?

J.—O, an, there's ah, a very important little matter I ah, perhaps should mention to you.

MRS. N.—(L, with Mrs. M. and talking as she enters) O, Molly, you just can't imagine how perfectly lovely I think it is going to be. (She stops at center back. Mrs. M. next and Mary, who enters with them, at L, close to Jimmy).

FLO.—(R, with Mr. S. and Marjory. The girls have him by the arms) And just think, Gimper, we will get to see you every day. (They complete the semi-circle with Dan R. This should leave Mr. N. R of table and J. L).

MR. S.—William, my boy, this is fine! And now there is just one thing more and I can truly say I am a happy old man.

D.—Boy, you better listen to me and RUN.

J.—All right, Uncle Dan. Come on, Mary. (Takes her by the hand and starts L. Holds her hand).

MR. N.—Just a minute, there. I am ready to listen to that very important little matter you said you wanted to mention to me.

J.—Oh, ah, ah, that can wait, sir.

MRS. N.—Now, William, that isn't fair.

MR. N.—Very well. I know all about it, son, and I couldn't be better pleased. He is just an AVERAGE MAN, Mary. Do the best you can with him. You may draw on me, Jimmy, for a nice honeymoon, and we all hope it will be a full one.

CURTAIN. END.

(Cut Out on Dotted Line.)

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